The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

by Mark Haddon
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About the Author:
This is Mark Haddon's first attempt at a novel; he has previously worked in illustrations, writing children's books, writing on TV. And even with people with mental and physical disabilities. He is amazed by the recent attention his book is creating. In a recent interview, Haddon explained the book as, "Here is a fiction about a character who says he can only tell the truth; he can't tell lies  — but he gets everything wrong. Here is a narrator who seems to be hugely ill-equipped for writing a book — he can't understand metaphor, he can't understand other people's emotions, he misses the bigger picture — and yet it makes him incredibly well suited to narrating a book. He never explains too much. He never tries to persuade the reader to feel about things this way or that way; he just kind of paints this picture and says, 'Make of it what you will.' Which is a kind of writing that many writers are searching for all the time." Many have wondered how and why he chose to write a novel based on a 15 year old autistic boy who discovers a murdered dog, he said, "For me, disability is a way of getting some extremity, some kind of very difficult situation, that throws an interesting light on people. But it's also something that's terribly, terribly ordinary. There are these extreme situations, but they're happening somewhere in your street at this very moment. And that's important to me, to find the extraordinary inside the ordinary." showing that he can have the readers relate with those who have disabilities.
(All in formation is gathered from http://www.powells.com/authors/haddon.html)

A brief summary:
Christopher is a 15 year old young man with Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism. He is living in the suburbs of England in a town called Swindon with his father. He is very bright, loves numbers, science, mysteries and lists. He wants to take the A level mat exam and go to university to study to become and astronaut. He hates the color yellow and brown, strangers and crowds and has just found his neighbor's dog murdered in her back yard with a garden fork. Christopher devotes the rest of the novel to finding the killer of Mrs. Shears' dog Wellington. Along the way, he not only solves the mystery of the missing dog, but also a mystery to his past.

Some helpful information

Definition of the term Autism:
Autism is a severely damaging life long disability that appears during the first three years of life. It occurs in approximately fifteen out of every 10,000 births and is four times more common in boys than girls. Autism knows no boundaries; it has been found all the world in families of all racial, ethnic, and social make-ups. No known factors in the psychological environment of a child have been shown to cause autism.
The symptoms are caused by physical disorders of the brain. They include:

- Disturbances in the rate of appearance of physical, social and language skills.
- Abnormal responses to sensations. Any one or a combination of senses or responses is affected: sight, hearing, touch, pain, balance, smell, taste, and the way a child holds his body.
- Speech and language are absent or delayed while specific thinking capabilities might be present.
- Abnormal ways of relating to people, objects, and events.

Autism occurs by itself or in association with other disorders, which affect the function of the brain such as viral infections, metabolic disturbances, and epilepsy. It can also be accompanied by mental retardation. Special educational programs using behavioral methods have proven to be the most helpful treatment.

(Information found http://www.autism-resources.com/autismfaq-defi.html)

**Characteristics of Asperger’s Syndrome:**

Asperger’s Syndrome is a form of autism. With typical autistic children, language delays (trouble speaking to not speaking at all) are found in most cases, with Asperger’s syndrome, there is no language delays (as you will see by our narrator). Some medicines and therapy are helpful in treating SYMPTOMS of the disorder, but there is no cure for Asperger’s Syndrome. Typically, these children are very anxious; they like schedule that DO NOT change and they like have a hard time connecting with people. They do not look into someone’s eyes when they are talking nor do they understand simple things like facial expression or the tone in people’s voice, something that can indicate a person’s feelings or emotions. They often have trouble with certain colors, textures (particularly on clothes), certain smells, and certain tastes. They do not like to be touched, be in unfamiliar surrounding, or be in close spaces with strangers. They do like close spaces when it is just them. In order to cope with too much information, sights, or sounds, they often need to go to a calming place, in this novel Christopher likes to hunch down in the fetal position and rock to calm himself, or he also is show to cram into very small-enclosed spaces in order to re-group. It is found in only males who tend to have a very high IQ, though this is not seen in all cases. They tend to be very good in the areas of math and science where logic and reasoning make sense, there is always an answer. Asperger’s children only see things in black and white; there is no in-between, as you will see from the book. We may look at a picture and see our family at a family party, but they will look at the picture and be able to list who is in the picture what they are wearing, anything down to the smallest detail, but would have great difficulty describing the emotions of the people in the picture. They need things in order, from their bedrooms, to their houses to every aspect of life.

(Info found at http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/, http://www.aspergerinfo.com/)
References to Sherlock Holmes:
Sherlock Holmes was a popular storybook detective in the late 1890's. Sherlock Holmes and his partner Dr. Watson were the crime solvers in all 56 of his short stories. He solved crimes by using step-by-step logic to work out a conclusion to the crimes. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was the author of these stories. He was both a doctor and a writer.

Active Reading Strategy:
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

Reading actively will help you to better understand the texts you encounter. You will use this skill throughout your life to make sense of what you read- good readers, at all levels, use these strategies.

Write upon the pages of the book you are reading. This will increase your comprehension of the story. The goal is to form the habit of using a consistent marking system that is easy for you to remember. For your independent reading, focus on the following markings. Following these guidelines is important and will contribute to your grade.

1. Character Descriptions: It is important to get to know the people you are reading about.
   1. Each time a new character is introduced, CIRCLE his/her name
   2. Underline and write some DESCRIPTIONS of those characters

2. Quotes:
   1. Highlight quotes that seem important to you or that you particularly like, mark off to the side what it refers to

3. Confusing Passages
   1. Put a QUESTION MARK ? in the margin and write questions about your reading (You can use post it notes if you would like)
   2. PARAPHRASE (put into your own words) what you think the meaning is to the best of your abilities

4. Vocabulary:
   1. Underline Vocabulary words you do not know
   2. Look up the meaning in a dictionary and write the definition in the margin

***** Side Note*****
Each Chapter is given a prime number; these are numbers that are divisible by one and itself. I will list the questions in order as based in the book.
Study Questions:
You may answer the following questions directly in this packet, or you may mark the answers to these questions and number the question directly in your book.

Chapter 2, 3, and 5

1. What did the narrator find? Describe the conditions of the scene.

2. What was the name of the dog? Who did it belong to? What kind of dog was it?

3. Describe some things about Christopher John Boone... What is he like? (continue doing this throughout the novel)

4. Who is Siobhan? What do you think her job is? What does she do for Christopher?

5. What does he do to the dog? What happens next?

6. How does he react to Mrs. Shears?

Chapter 7, 11, 13, and 19

7. What kind of book is he writing? Why?

8. Why does he like dogs?

9. Describe some important details of his first meeting with the police.
10. Why will there be no jokes in his book?

11. Why are prime numbers like life? What does this say about Christopher?

Chapter 23, 29, 31, 37, and 41

12. What happened when Christopher got to jail? What were some of the things that he had with him? What does this say about him?

13. What are the two reasons Christopher finds people confusing?

14. Why should metaphor be called lies? How does he feel about lies?

15. What does father show that he loves Christopher without touching him?

16. Why are similes okay and better than metaphors?

17. What happens to Christopher at the police station?

18. What is a lie to Christopher?

19. How does his father feel about Christopher trying to solve the mystery of Wellington
Chapter 43, 47, and 53

20. What happens to Christopher's mother?

21. Describe the way Christopher rates a good day from a black day?

22. In the end, what happens to mother? How does it happen? Who comes over to help the family?

Chapter 59

23. What two reasons have Christopher decide to continue his search for the killer?

24. How does Mrs. Shears react to his questions and his detective work? What is a "red herring"?

Chapter 61

25. Why do you think Christopher didn't go to the funeral?

26. What does Christopher decide to do on Saturday? What is his plan?

27. What is the result of his detective work? (focus particularly on how people in the neighborhood react to his questions)
Chapter 71, 79, 83, and 89

28. How does Christopher describe his school? What are your thoughts on his description of having "learning difficulties" or special needs?*

29. What are Christopher's future plans? Why is this so controversial?

30. Highlight some of Christopher's behavior problems. Why is he able to overcome these?

31. What is his definition of a "white lie"? Do you agree with this?

32. How does father feel about Mr. Shears? Predict why he has these feelings.

33. Describe what happens during Christopher's black day.

Chapter 97, 101, 103, and 109

34. Christopher has a "Super Good Day". Why? What does he find out from Mrs. Alexander? How does this make him feel?

35. Why does Christopher like math? What does Mr. Jevens say about this?

36. Rhodri works with father. How does he treat Christopher? Does Christopher understand this treatment?
37. How do Christopher’s “descriptions” make the story become real for the reader?

39. What is Christopher’s favorite book? Who wrote it? Highlight some details about this book?

Chapter 113, 127, and 137

40. Why is Christopher’s memory like a film? Highlight some details about this.

41. Why is father so angry in Chapter 127? What happens between the two of them?

42. Highlight some reasons why Christopher dislikes the colors of yellow and brown.

43. How does father make up for the fight? What were some of his favorite things he saw at the zoo?

Chapter 149 and 151

44. What does Christopher discover in the chapter that will help him with the murder of Wellington?

45. Where does Christopher find his book? What else does he find?

46. Based on his deduction, who wrote this letter?

47. Why was he so confused? What do you think this means?????

Chapter 157

48. How many days go by before he can get back into his father’s closet?

49. What does he find when he starts to read the letter?
50. How does his father find him? How does he try to explain this?

Chapter 163

51. When Christopher says "When I was little I didn't understand about other people having minds." (Page 116) What do you think that means?

52. Highlight some characteristics of how he thinks of computers.

Chapter 167 and 173

53. What do we learn about Christopher's father? Has your opinion changed about him since the beginning of the book?

54. Highlight some of the feelings Christopher is having now that he knows the truth.

55. What does he decide to do about the situation?

Chapter 179

56. Christopher ran away in this chapter. What are some important decisions he made? How does he come to this decision?

57. What does he ask Mrs. Alexander to do for him?

58. When he arrives back at his house, what does he take from his father?
59. What does he find when he gets to his school? How does this make him feel?

60. Again, which we have seen time and time again in this story, what is he using to "protect" himself?

61. For the next few Chapters, Christopher needs to talk to a lot of strangers on his quest to get to the train station. Highlight some of the important sounds, feelings, and frustrations he is having in order to get to London to find his mom.

**Chapter 181, 191, and 193**

61. Imagine not being able to "glance" at anything and only seeing what Christopher sees (which is everything). How would that make you feel? Describe some of the details that he sees. Could this put him on overload?

62. His mind is being overloaded because of the noise, people and signs, how does he manage to get to through the train station?

63. How long was he sitting at the train station before the policeman found him? Why does he talk to the policeman?

64. Describe how the police officer helps Christopher.

65. Why does Christopher like timetables?
Chapter 197, 199

66. How does Christopher manage to stay on the train?

67. Highlight some of the sights, sounds, and problems he runs into on the train? What kinds of things does he to calm himself from the information overload?

68. What are his thoughts on God?

Chapter 211, 223

69. When Christopher finally arrives in London, he is on complete overload. Highlight some important things in this chapter that shows how his "mind is not working properly"? How does he avoid talking to people? How does he block out the noise?

70. What are his reasons for not being able to go home? Is he thinking clearly? Should he be scared of his father?

71. Siobhan tries to teach him how to imagine things in order to take his mind off overload. He can’t do this. Why?

Chapter 227

72. Christopher loses Toby. What does he do to find him (what does he do to almost get himself killed)? Strangers try to help him, how does he react.

73. Christopher is finally able to get on a train and find Wilsden Junction. What does he do to calm his mind as he travels to find his mom?

74. Christopher gets of the train and buys a map. He is able to get himself to his mother’s house. Who is she with? How does she react to finding Christopher at her doorstep?
75. Do you think his father is sincere? Is he sorry, does he want to take Christopher back home? On the other hand, do you think his mother is capable of taking care of Christopher?

Chapter 229 and 233

75. Describe Christopher's recurring dream. What do you think about this?

76. Mother says he can stay with her. What are some of the things they do on their first day? How does he react?

77. Christopher needs to get back to Swindon, Why?

78. How does Mr. Shears feel about this arrangement?

79. What does mother end up doing? Why? What does she think about Christopher taking the A level math test? Is this important to her?

80. In the end, Christopher decided to take his A level maths, even thought he is not feeling quite right. Who is the proctor of these tests?

81. Where are they staying while they are in Swindon? What does father do to try to help Christopher trust him again?

82. How does he do on his A level maths?

83. Do you think he will ever be able to trust his father again? Why?